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Making Sure About the CIA

Extraordinary is the only word for the powers of the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Conceivably, he might involve the United States in war. Short of that extreme, the agency is engaged not only in the search for information by espionage and any other means it deems suitable, but possibly also in political intrigues in many parts of the world. All this without the clear knowledge of Congress. Even the CIA budget, obviously big, is a guarded secret.

Especially since the tragic fiasco of the Cuban invasion, the risks involved in its activities have engendered a desire for greater assurance about the work of the CIA. Since the Government may make perilous decisions on the agency's say-so, its head—at the least—should be one of the most mature, objective and responsible men in Washington.

John A. McCone, former head of the Atomic Energy Commission, was named to the post by President Kennedy after Congress adjourned. Now that it is again in session, Senator Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota says that he will oppose confirmation. This may not please the White House and it may offend some men on Capitol Hill, but the quietly competent Senator from Minnesota is conscientiously doing his duty.

Objections to Mr. McCone have been raised on his record. It is a question whether these are disqualifying. Yet it would be a dereliction of congressional responsibility if such matters were not looked into. As Senator McCarthy has indicated, the investigation also should go into policies established by Mr. McCone for the CIA—especially whether he believes he has a mandate to use force

anywhere in the world, even in violation of United States treaty obligations. In insisting on a review of Mr. McCone's qualifications, Senator McCarthy serves his country well.